



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Media Note: Photos to accompany this article and a MS Word version of this press release are available for download at <https://ow.ly/T8yj50Qhmcb>

BIRDS GEORGIA WELCOMES FOUR NEW BOARD MEMBERS

(ATLANTA, GA,) December 19, 2023 – Birds Georgia welcomed four new directors elected by members to the Board of Directors at their annual meeting on December 3. Beth Allgood Blalock, Michael Chriszt, Colleen McEdwards, and Sally Sears were elected for three-year terms beginning January 1, 2024. In addition, Joshua Andrews, Robert Cooper, Marc Goncher, and Susan Maclin will return to the Board of Directors for a second three-year term. Marc Goncher, Senior Legal Counsel, Environmental, Safety and Sustainability for The Coca-Cola Company, will succeed Paige Martin as Board Chair when her term ends on December 31.

Beth Allgood Blalock is an attorney with Gilbert Harrell and has a wide range of experience working on land-based environmental issues. Her primary practice areas include environmental regulatory, compliance, and permitting issues, and the acquisition and redevelopment of properties with environmental impacts. She serves as a lecturer on brownfields and regulatory issues in Georgia, sits on the board of the Georgia Brownfield Association and the Georgia Environmental Conference Steering Committee and is currently an adjunct professor at the Georgia State University College of Law. Beth is the lead facilitator of the Institute for Georgia Environmental Leadership (IGEL) and a 2016 IGEL graduate. She and her husband reside in Atlanta with their two children.

Michael Chriszt is vice president and regional engagement officer in the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta's Corporate Engagement Division. In this role, he serves as the Atlanta Fed's lead public engagement officer focusing on smaller cities and towns in the Sixth District. Mike has served on several boards, most recently as Chair of the Georgia Council on Economic Education and on the executive committee of Kennesaw State University's Coles College of Business. He is a member of the National

Association of Business Economists and the Atlanta Economics Club, where he served as president from 2015 to 2017. A native of Cleveland, Ohio, Mike is married to Maxine and they have five children and three grandchildren.

Colleen McEdwards is an online instructor with the University of Florida's renowned distance-learning graduate program in communication and media studies (CJC Online). She designs and delivers online courses in video storytelling. After a 30-year career in international media at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and CNN International, Colleen transitioned to academia, helping new generations of communicators discover what's next for digital media. She has taught at the Sam Nunn School of International Affairs (Georgia Tech), Georgia State University, and Kennesaw State University. Prior to her transition to academia, Colleen spent almost 20 years as an anchor and correspondent for CNN International. Colleen earned a Ph.D. in Education while working at CNN International, partnering with CNN's international affiliates throughout the process. She is a United States/Canadian citizen, a former competitive athlete and an avid sports fan.

Sally Sears, an award-winning news reporter and author, is a founding director of the South Fork Conservancy. The Trust for Public Land named her its 2015 Trail Blazer for her leadership of the vision of linking communities with low-impact trails along the South Fork and other tributaries of Peachtree Creek. Her environmental and community work is an outgrowth of decades of news reporting in growing cities across the South. Special televised reports on solutions to north Georgia's growth issues of water, land use, and traffic helped her find the broader community connections to create cooperation among partners. Sally covered politics and suburban growth for metro Atlanta television stations, including WAGA and WSB TV, since 1984. She served as the founding chair of the DeKalb County watershed oversight committee in 2009. Sally is a native of Montevallo, Alabama, and a *magna cum laude* graduate of Princeton University. She lives in Atlanta with her husband, Richard Belcher, and their son, Will.

"We are excited to welcome Beth, Michael, Colleen, and Sally to the Birds Georgia Board of Directors," says Paige Martin, outgoing board chair. "These individuals bring a wealth of talents and experiences to the Board that will help Birds Georgia fulfill its mission of building places where birds and people thrive."

Additional Birds Georgia board members include Paige Martin, Scott Porter, Esther Stokes, Joshua Gassman, Laurene Hamilton, Gus Kaufman, Mary Anne Lanier, Jennifer Johnson McEwen, Ellen Miller, Jon Philipsborn, Marlena Reed, James Renner, LaTresse Snead, Amy Beth Sparks, and Ayanna Williams.

For more information on Birds Georgia visit <https://www.birdsgeorgia.org/>.

About Birds Georgia: *Birds Georgia is building places where birds and people thrive. We create bird-friendly communities through conservation, education, and community engagement. Founded in 1926 as the Atlanta Bird Club, the organization became a chapter of National Audubon in 1973, and continues as an independent chapter of National Audubon Society today. We look forward to celebrating the 100-year anniversary of our organization in 2026. Learn more at <https://www.birdsgeorgia.org/>.*

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